



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Highlights

May 2019: The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is presently located in twenty-two different locations in the four primary Connecticut River watershed states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

A weekend of smiles, laughs and fishing! Conte Refuge hosts two Cops & Bobbers, Hooks & Ladders programs this month



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Refuge worked with partners in Massachusetts and Connecticut to host Cops and Bobbers, Hooks and Ladders events with UMass, Amherst and Granby Mass, and Hartford, CT. Both events brought lots of laughs and fun as participants caught fish, explored pond life and connected with members of their communities. What also makes these events so successful is the partnerships with the State, Cities, and community volunteers. The city of Hartford paired a Police Cadet to each young participant to spend the day with and create a mentoring bond. Thanks to generous donations from Cabela's and local businesses, we provided food, t-shirts, bags and other prizes for every kid and volunteer who participated.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Archery is coming to Conte Refuge



Photo Credit: USFWS

In early May, the Conte Staff participated in Archery Instructor Training given by Werner Barz of NCTC. Werner made the trip from Shepherdstown to Hadley, MA to spend two days training staff from Conte, S.B. McKinney and Eastern MA Complex on how to run an archery program. Our plan is to have our 2019 YCC crew build an accessible archery range this summer at the Fort River Division. Once complete the range will be open to the public and used for youth and family archery programs run by the refuge.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov



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Fishing with Springfield Boys and Girls Club



Photo Credit: USFWS

Conte Staff welcomed Memorial Day Weekend with a visit from young ladies from the Springfield Boys and Girls Club. Ten girls came to fish at the Cronin Aquatic Resource Center, most for the first time ever. The girls were thrilled to learn how to cast and catch native brook trout stocked in the pond by Berkshire National Fish Hatchery. Our two visiting ACE interns also helped with the program, helping girls bait hooks, cast and taking fish off the lines. By the end of the program most of the girls were either holding the fish they caught or at least giving it a pat on the head before sending it back into the water. We plan to host more groups from the Boys and Girls Club this summer.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Honoring Veterans for Memorial Day Through Fishing



Photo Credit: USFWS

For more than 20 years, Veteran's from the VA in Leeds, MA and the Holyoke Soldier's Home have participated in a fishing program held at the Cronin Aquatic Resource Center. This year was no different, with 40 Veteran's and volunteers enjoying a gorgeous day outside, fishing, BBQing and telling stories with friends. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Greenfield Chapter provided food for everyone, and volunteers to cook, help people fish and provide company for participants. We will sponsor two more events this year, the fourth Saturdays in June and July.

For more information contact: Jennifer_Lapis@fws.gov

Floodplain Forest Restoration



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Fannie Stebbins Division enters its final year of a three-year floodplain forest restoration. Once complete, the area will be the largest intact floodplain forest along the main stem of the Connecticut River. Contractors are finishing planting more than 8,000 stems of 37 different trees and plants this spring. Because of higher than anticipated brows from white tailed deer, staff are experimenting with deer protection in some of the restoration sites. In the month of May, staff protected 10 acres of trees with electric fencing that will be monitored by partners and volunteers.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov



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River Walkway and Outdoor Classroom

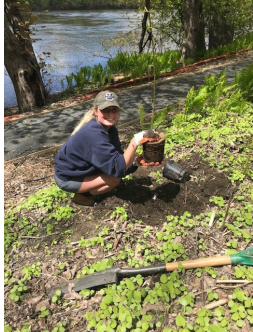


Photo Credit: USFWS

The Conte Refuge partnered with the Town of Sunderland, MA and the State of Massachusetts to restore an area along the Connecticut River. Visitors can now enjoy a three-quarter mile accessible and educational trail, as well as boating access to the river. Partners and volunteers planted native plants to help restore the area that was once overrun by invasive species. We are thankful to all the partners and volunteers who participated in this beneficial project.

For more information contact: David_Sagan@fws.gov

Aquatic Pollinator Garden at Fort River



Photo Credit: USFWS

This spring staff and volunteers at the Conte Refuge created an aquatic pollinator garden at the Fort River Division. The area around the newly formed vernal pool hosts native plants such as pussy willow, silky willow, buttonbush, arrow arum, blue iris, New England aster and blue vervain. The habitat is alive with barn swallows and other aerial insectivores feasting on a variety of insects attracted by the water and plants. The newly planted area compliments the pollinator garden developed last year, with an additional array of flora to attract a diverse suite of pollinator species.

For more information contact: Andrew_French@fws.gov

Visitor Surveys at Fort River Division



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Fort River Division of the Conte Refuge is part of a nation-wide effort to learn more about visitor experiences at National Wildlife Refuges. This May, interns from American Conservation Experience spent two weeks talking with visitors and will follow up with a visitor experience survey. Conte Staff will have the results of the survey in late Fall 2019, and will use the information to help improve all visitor experiences to the refuge.

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Nulhegan Basin Division, Vermont

A Mother's Day Youth Fishing Event



Photo Credit:
Northwoods Stewardship
Center

A Youth Fishing Event was held at the Northwoods Stewardship Center in northern Vermont on Mothers' Day weekend. The partnership between the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the Dwight Eisenhower National Fish Hatchery and Northwoods Stewardship Center was an overwhelming success. All of the participants caught multiple brook trout that ranged from 9-14" in length. The Northwoods staff provided demonstrations on how to tie knots, and clean and cook fish.

For more information contact Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Essex County Conservation Field Day



Photo Credit: Essex County
Soil and Water Conservation
District

The annual Essex County Conservation Field Day was held for 5th and 6th graders. More than 60 school kids learned about the Connecticut River watershed, habitat management, aquatic connectivity and land protection. In addition to Essex County Soil and Water District staff, the Conte Refuge and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife collaborated to put the conservation field day together for the local schools.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Pondicherry Migratory Bird Day



Photo Credit: David
Govatski

What could be better than to spend an entire day watching birds at the Pondicherry Division of the Conte Refuge? The Pondicherry Division is located in northern New Hampshire and lies at the base of the Presidential Mountain Range of the White Mountains National Forest. Over 60 dedicated volunteers spent from sunrise to sunset tallying 102 species of birds.

For more information contact Steve_Agius@fws.gov



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Nulhegan Basin Division, Vermont

Vermont Land Ethic Workshop



Photo Credit: Aldo Leopold Foundation

Federal, State and NGOs worked together for the past year with the Aldo Leopold Foundation to develop and provide a three day Vermont Land Ethic Workshop. The workshop was taught by the Aldo Leopold Foundation and included 30 conservation leaders from throughout the state of Vermont. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a statewide team that will focus on land ethic issues that range from timber management, agriculture, land fragmentation, climate change and biodiversity.

For more information contact Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Adult Hunter Education Course in Vermont



Photo Credit: USFWS

The Nulhegan Basin Division staff partnered with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, Vermont Nature Conservancy, Northwoods Stewardship, National Wild Turkey Federation and Backcountry Hunters and Anglers for a three day adult hunter education course. The hunter education course speakers included the Commissioner and Director of the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Vermont Director of the Nature Conservancy, the Vermont Land Trust and Conte Refuge staff. The program included a final day of turkey hunting on the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Conte Refuge.

For more information contact: Steve_Agius@fws.gov

Youth Environmental Education



Photo Credit: USFWS

The first grade class of the Groveton Elementary School came to the Nulhegan Basin Division to visit a vernal pool and learn about habitat management and wildlife conservation. These adventurous students spotted frog and salamander egg masses and heard a wood frog chorus.

For more information contact Steve_Agius@fws.gov